

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 LA PAZ 05590 142324Z  
ACTION SS-25

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-----031498 142328Z /15  
O 142305Z JUL 78  
FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1655

C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 5590

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, BL  
SUBJ: BOLIVIAN ELECTORAL COURT STILL WRINGING ITS HANDS

1. THIS AFTERNOON ELECTORAL COURT PRESIDENT MANTILLA AND HIS DEPUTY CESPEDAS ASKED FOR A SECRET MEETING WITH ME WHICH, AFTER CHAPLINESQUE PREPARATIONS, WE HELD. HE WANTED TO PRESENT THREE CONCERNS TO ME: A) THAT IF ALL THE SUSPECT BALLOTS WERE ANNULLED IT MIGHT BE SUCH A DRAMATICALLY LARGE QUANTITY THAT THE PEOPLE WOULD DISCREDIT THE WHOLE PROCESS; B) THAT THE OPPOSITION PARTIES WERE TAKING SUCH A STRIDENT POSITION VIZ-A-VIZ ELECTORAL FRAUD THAT THE ONLY ACCEPTABLE RESULT TO THEM WOULD BE ONE OF THEM WINNING IN EVERY DEPARTMENT (A RESULT WHICH THE LEGITIMATE VOTES WOULD NOT SUPPORT); AND C) THAT BANZER, THE MILITARY AND PEREDA WERE PRESSING A RESULT OF 51 PERCENT FOR PEREDA SO HARD THAT THE COURT CLEARLY DID NOT HAVE THE BACKING OF THE GOVERNMENT OR THE MILITARY FOR A CONSCIENTIOUS CLEAN-UP OPERATION. MANTILLA SAID HE FEARED UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES A MASSIVE ANNULMENT OF VOTES COULD CAUSE A MILITARY COUP AGAINST RETURN TO ELECTED GOVERNMENT.

2. MANTILLA SAID HE AND CESPEDAS WERE CONFRONTED BY LARGE-SCALE FRAUD; AS AN EXAMPLE, HE SAID A REVIEW TODAY OF 36 URNS FROM ONE PROVINCE OF LA PAZ HAD RESULTED IN  
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DISQUALIFICATION OF 33. HE SAID HE WAS STILL PREPARED TO CONTEMPLATE A LARGE-SCALE ANNULMENT OF SUSPECT VOTES IF THE MAJOR POLITICAL FORCES SHOWED AN INCLINATION TO ACCEPT THIS RESULT PEACEFULLY.

3. I TOLD MANTILLA AND CESPEDAS THAT THEY HAD THE CONSTITUTIONAL JOB TO DEAL WITH ALL FRAUD THEY COULD FIND.

I COULD TRY TO ALLEVIATE THEIR POLITICAL CONCERNS, BUT IN THE  
END THEIRS WAS A CONSTITUTIONAL OBLIGATION WHICH I DID NOT  
SEE HOW THEY COULD FULFILL WITHOUT A LARGE-SCALE ANNULMENT  
OF THE VOTES. I SAID I WOULD DO WHAT I COULD WITH THE  
GOVERNMENT AND THE POLITICAL PARTIES TO COUNSEL MODERATION  
IN THEIR REACTIONS AND SUPPORT FOR THE ELECTORAL COURT'S  
DOING ITS CONSTITUTIONAL JOB. I TOLD HIM MY IMPRESSION  
WAS THAT THE ATTITUDE OF SOME OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES  
WAS NOT THE INFLEXIBLE UNCOMPROMISING ONE THEY SAW. THERE  
WAS ROOM FOR ACCOMMODATION AMONG PARTIES IF THE ELECTORAL  
COURT WAS THOROUGHLY REVIEWED AND REVISED TO PRODUCE A  
FAIR RESULT. THE MAJOR THREAT TO PEACE WAS A PEREDA  
VICTORY BY 40 PERCENT OR WHATEVER VOTES AND 6 PERCENT  
FRAUD WHICH COULD DESTROY THE CENTER OF BOLIVIAN POLITICS  
AND PIT EVERYONE AGAINST AN ENTRENCHED AND DISCREDITED  
GOVERNMENT.

4. MANTILLA ASKED IF I WAS GOING TO SEE BANZER. I  
TOLD HIM I WAS TRYING TO SEE BANZER TO TELL HIM THAT A  
FRAUDULENT ELECTORAL RESULT WOULD IMPACT NEGATIVELY THE  
GAMUT OF US-BOLIVIAN RELATIONS. I COULD CERTAINLY INCLUDE  
THAT POINT THAT BANZER SHOULD GIVE THE COURT A CLEAR  
MANDATE TO DO ITS JOB. MANTILLA ENDED ON THE NOTE  
THAT HE WOULD SUSPEND THE COUNT FOR A DAY OR TWO AND WAIT  
FOR A MIRACLE.

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5. COMMENT: MANTILLA IS CLEARLY LOOKING FOR SOMEONE TO  
TAKE THIS CUP FROM HIM. BUT HE MAY WELL NOT HAVE DECIDED  
WHAT TO DO IF HE IS LEFT ALONE IN THE GARDER.

6. BANZER HAS BEEN HOLED UP IN HIS PRIVATE RESIDENCE ALL DAY  
WITH HIS PRINCIPAL ADVISERS. I WILL TRY TO SEE HIM AND  
THE MINISTER OF INTERIOR ASAP.  
BOEKER

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NNN

## Message Attributes

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**Decaption Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
**Decaption Note:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
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